

ELKRIDGE PATCH

Say What You Want About Proposed Cargo Station, But Say It By May 27

The public has less than two weeks left to comment about the intermodal facility proposal before the project moves to the next phase, say officials.

By [Elizabeth Janney](#) | 6:00am

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If citizens have something to say about the freight transfer facility that could be coming to Howard, Prince George's or Anne Arundel County, they should say it in the next 10 days.

There is a May 27 cutoff for public comment on the project before it moves into its next stage of development.

Having the deadline enables officials to "identify a snapshot to assess what the questions were," said Caitlin Rayman, assistant secretary of Transportation Policy and Freight for the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT).

The comment period began [March 24](#) with the announcement of four candidate sites for the train-truck transfer station.

Currently, locations proposed are on Hanover Road at Race Road (Howard County); Brock Bridge Road (Anne Arundel County); Montevideo Road (Howard County); and Beltsville (Prince George's County).

In late April, MDOT and partner CSX presented a trio of information sessions about the project—one in each county containing a prospective site—to explain more about the facility, which would be a hub for trains and trucks loading and unloading cargo.

The timeframe between the workshops and the comment period's expiration allows for people to process what they learned and respond to that information, said Rayman, who spoke with Patch at the Howard County workshop on April 27 in Elkridge.

In addition to viewing posters and demo videos, workshop attendees were given the opportunity to fill out [comment cards](#).

Of the 265 attendees, 110 submitted comment cards, according to the [Elkridge workshop summary](#) posted on the [intermodal project's website](#) on May 9.

In Elkridge, aside from the comment cards, “many persons provided lists of questions they would like answered, ranging from a couple questions to over a hundred questions,” said the report.

“MDOT and CSX are developing responses to address these questions,” Jack Cahalan, spokesman for MDOT, said in an e-mail. He said the responses would be posted to the website, which he anticipated wouldn’t be for “several weeks.”

On May 27, the comment period will come to a close. After that, “we’ll be in a position to proceed to the next phase,” said Rayman.

There is speculation about what “the next phase” means, among residents as well as elected officials.

Del. James Malone and Sen. Edward Kasemeyer told greater Elkridge residents at an [April 21 meeting](#) that the list of candidate sites would narrow from four to two by July.

“I don’t know why people think that is the plan,” said Rayman. “If sites were to come out, it would be because FRA said, ‘You hit a roadblock on something that doesn’t make sense to take through the process.’ But we wouldn’t down-select without talking to the Federal Railroad Administration and the public.”

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is the agency providing federal oversight for the project.

What would make a site qualify for being “down-selected”?

“I don’t know until we meet with the FRA,” said Rayman.

According to Cahalan, the communication is already taking place. “We have briefed FRA and FHWA [Federal Highway Administration] on the comments received to date,” said Cahalan, on May 13. “We will continue to brief them on feedback received from the public during the comment period.”

The briefings and meeting minutes between the FRA and MDOT during the public comment period have not been made public.

To submit questions or comments, email intermodal@mdot.maryland.gov, call 410-684-7056 or write to Bradley Smith; Maryland Department of Transportation, Office of Freight and Multimodalism; 7201 Corporate Center Dr.; Hanover, MD 21076.

TABLE: Comparison of the three workshops

| County hosting workshop | Attendees | Comments | Percentage that submitted comment cards | Percentage that said workshop answered questions |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------|---|--|
| Prince George's | 130 | 41 | 31.5% | 83% said yes |
| Anne Arundel | 55 | 7 | 12.7% | 75% said yes |
| Howard | 265 | 110 | 41.5% | 20% said yes |

Source: [Beltsville](#) workshop summary, [Hanover](#) workshop summary, [Elkridge](#) workshop summary